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The Polling District Secretary

by Councillor A. A. LOUGHTON

ALL OUR CONSTITUENCY parties are now busy overhauling the electoral machinery ready for the next trial of strength. This is an opportune time to consider whether our ward organisation is in itself efficient, and the best machinery for fighting elections.

The local government ward is admirable as a basis for our party discussions, and for developing the personnel who will advance to responsible positions as party candidates for local government. It is usually in the throes of election activity, however, that we are forcibly reminded of its weaknesses. The ward is too large; the electorate covered too numerous for ward officials to attend to it adequately.

This is where we as a Party could profitably learn from the practice followed by Electoral Registration Officers. Invariably the Electoral Registration Officer follows the method of breaking down the local government wards into polling districts.

Each polling district is made up of groups of adjacent streets. The Election Register is made up in this way; first the polling districts within a ward, then wards within a constituency. Such units contain anything from 1 to 6,000 electors.

The time has come when we could consider within the framework of ward organisation, dividing our work and active personnel, amongst the polling districts which go to make up the ward.

We would gain by such a move not only in the hurly burly of the election itself, but our active workers would be able to concentrate exclusively on those electors on the polling district Register. This is important, to be in a position to ensure that all our supporters cast their votes.

The electoral Register is compiled once a year, and with the growth of housing estates and a movement taking place among the population, large numbers are in danger of losing their votes.

Normally the party does not learn of this until an election is actually on, within a few days of the date for the poll, when a call is made into some committee room by a person who once lived at so and so, but has removed somewhere else.

Such changes and shifts of registered electors escape the notice of the ward secretary. Even in the case of his own members, it takes time through the methods of dues collection to realise that

our once stalwart supporter in so and so street, has now moved out of the district.

If we possessed a team of active workers, responsible for the small number of streets that comprise a polling district, we would be in a position to watch and know of such removals. Further, if our teams were trained we would be able to ensure that where known supporters move outside the district, their names are placed on the Absent Voters' List by filling in the necessary form R.P.F.8.

The 'Polling District Secretary' type of organisation would have many other advantages for harassed agents. When the Electoral Register is published he usually receives from the Town Hall four copies of the New Register, two double- and two single-sided copies. If he were able to pass the single-sided copies to the polling district secretaries for cutting up into strips for the membership canvass, he would be relieved of the worry of how best to dispose of the enormous bulk of Registers that come to him once a year.

Even during the 'Claims and Objection' stage of the compilation of the Electoral Register, January 10th to 24th, agents could get assistance from the polling secretaries.

A timely check of those on the electoral lists would be of great assistance to agents. In this way our party machinery and active personnel would acquire an interest in the compilation and accuracy of the Register which elections are fought on.

Polling district secretaries have other duties apart from keeping a weather eye on all possible Labour votes. They could be the means whereby our party can reach those good paying members with the latest pamphlet and information about party functions.

If we are to reap the maximum benefits from the extended facilities of postal voting then we must have the means and organisation for finding out within our wards and constituencies those electors and supporters who are legitimately entitled to be registered as Absent Voters.

An organisation that specialises its work, appeal and personnel on the unit of the polling district, offers the best possibility for the organisation of our maximum voting strength.

Producing a News-sheet—2

by P. K. HARLE

THE FUNCTION of any piece of publicity is to attract the attention of the public and then to deliver the intended message swiftly, forcibly, and logically.

In this article I hope to demonstrate how our message can be got over to the public in a manner both easy to read and digest.

The job really begins with the writing of the articles for the daily newspapers in particular have made modern man quick to detect out of date phrasing and writing. The immediate reaction is to identify such writing with an out of date philosophy, which is the last thing we want.

Try to write simply and sincerely, without pompousness, covering one theme rather than half a dozen. If you use a slogan, use a single one and plug it for all you are worth.

The method of presentation (whether, for instance, we use one, two, or three columns on the page), depends on the length of copy. This also determines the size of type used.

On receiving the manuscript of an article ('copy', of course, is merely the trade term for 'manuscript') our first task is to make a rough estimate of how many words it contains. It is then possible to obtain some idea of how to distribute it on the page and what type to choose.

If we have a large amount of copy we choose a small type, whilst a small amount of copy will call for a larger type. It is also possible to space the copy out by widening the spaces between the lines of type.

This is termed 'leading out' because the printer inserts strips of metal called 'leads' between each line of type.

An ideal length of line is one which contains between 8 and 10 words. An article made up of lines of such a length is easy to read. It means that the reader's eyes do not have to jump continually from line to line.

At this stage we might sum up so far by repeating the first questions a typographer should ask himself.

They are: (a) How much copy have we? (b) Can we take the copy right across the page in a single column? (c) Do we want two or three columns to help break up a grey mass of small type? (d) Do we

want a drop initial letter and a few words of even small capitals to give a good start? (This article has been started that way.) (e) Do we want an opening paragraph in bold type right across the page?

Emphasis in the Text

The golden rule to follow is that emphasis should be used sparingly. It can be best achieved in the following ways: with **bold type**, used sparingly, otherwise it can be too strong; *italics* for long passages; or CAPITAL letters for emphasising occasional individual words.

One thing to remember, it is bad to use underlining in the text to obtain emphasis.

What types can be used for text? All of the following are satisfactory: Caslon, Garamond, Bembo, Baskerville, Times Imprint, Plantin and Bodoni. The type faces Times, Baskerville, Bodoni, Imprint and Plantin have the ascending and descending strokes reduced which means that greater legibility is obtained when the lines are set closely.

It is convenient to have the following general rules in mind regarding types: (a) Keep to a single type throughout, adding emphasis by the methods already given. (b) Order the printer to set closely and evenly, breaking words rather than letting spacing. (c) Drop initials must range with type lines.

For headings and sub-headings probably the best types to choose from are: Corvinus, Bodoni, Beton, Gothic, Playbill, Rockwell, Slim Black.

Sub-headings (there is one in this column), help our process of digestibility by breaking up the text and giving the reader a breathing space, as it were. In using them, however, you must first decide whether dignity or 'punch' is your intention.

If dignity is called for then sub-headings should not be too obtrusive and should be in the same type size as the text, either in even small caps or in italics.

If you are seeking 'punch', then use a bold sub-heading a little larger than the text.

Train yourself to detect the feel of different types and try to recognise them in daily newspapers and periodicals.

The Making of Socialists

by JOHN GRAHAM, Secretary-Agent, Sowerby

A FEW WEEKS AGO we launched throughout the Sowerby Division an intensive membership drive. Nothing extraordinary in that. Maybe not. But we have had membership drives before which have petered out and not achieved any particularly outstanding results.

Our ultimate goal is five thousand individual members, ten per cent. of the electorate and results now coming into the Divisional Office indicate that not only will we reach our target but that we shall pass it.

This time, we did a lot of preparatory thinking and spent quite a few nights with Harold Croft (not in the flesh but through Party Organisation) before the blue-print of the campaign was ready.

We started off with a number of one-day schools in various parts of the Division to which we invited members of the Party. At the afternoon sessions we dealt with the problems of party organisation, borrowing, very widely, from Harold Croft and Willie John Throup. Local difficulties were widely discussed.

In the evening sessions we ran two complete Ward Branch meetings for which comrades had rehearsed. The first ('The meeting that no one wants to attend,') depicted The Fluffy Secretary, The Disinterested Chairman, The Couldn't-care-less Treasurer and the Garrulous Counsellor. Then we ran the model Ward meeting, efficient, interesting and with a purpose.

Throughout the schools we emphasised that membership of the Party is something more than merely paying a contribution. That our members believe that Socialism is the only solution to the world's troubles and that membership of the Party is a declaration of that faith.

We pointed to the not so far distant days when membership brought with it great personal sacrifices and indeed, hardship. We could illustrate this from the lives of some of our older comrades who suffered persecution for their faith, who lost their jobs because of their adherence to the Labour cause. How much easier it is, we pointed out, for to-day's members. It is very easy, in Agency work, to settle down to a routine, which, stripped of any nationalisation, means simply taking things as they come. The Annual Meeting, The Local Elections, visits of the

Member, Annual Conference, Office routine and, always, raising 'brass'!

We need, periodically, to take stock of our position and to decide how much of our organisational work is producing Socialists. That a good membership is the basis of sound finance may be a truism but how many of us really accept its implications? Much easier to try the sweep and the other 'money-spinners.'

We don't make Socialists by selling raffle tickets or the like. But another individual member recruited during a good campaign is not only another Socialist, it's another head and another pair of hands and another six bob a year.

To sum up then, a membership campaign, if it is to be a success, should have a beginning but no end and the main essential to the campaign is a little quiet thought and discussion among the key officers on the lines on which the campaign should be run. As the existing membership will have to be your troops you must start with them.

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The Committee Room Officer

by J. W. RAISIN, London District Organiser

IN MY PREVIOUS ARTICLES I have traced the chain of responsibility from the Agent and his departmental officers at the Central Committee Room, through the Officers-in-charge of Main and Branch Committee Rooms, to the worker in the street. The point I have been trying to make is that, at whatever 'level' an election worker may be operating he can only be really effective if he knows the significance of what he is doing. This truth is constantly being asserted in respect of workers in industry; it is of equal application in electioneering.

But, of course, there is no time during an intensively fought election campaign for details to be discussed *ad lib* with all those involved. That is why the idea of an 'Election Committee' seldom works very well in practice—at least, not unless the extent of the participation of the Committee is severely restricted. Nor is consultation of a formal kind necessary, provided that everyone doing a job is in a position to know how their work fits in with the general scheme. This is most easily achieved if there is a general recognition of the functions assigned to each element in the election organisation and every worker has his post in one of these recognised stations.

Authority Not Defined

I do not like to see enthusiastic and well meaning, but untrained and unsuitable people assuming positions of authority in an election over experienced but less pushful members. Where this happens—and it does fairly often—it is usually due to the fact that the responsibility and authority associated with each office within the organisation is insufficiently defined. Situations of this sort constitute a very potent source of trouble and inefficiency in an election. Nerves are strained, there are sometimes 'scenes' and, more often there is well-concealed but none-the-less deeply felt resentment on the part of people who have no desire for public recognition but who, in tendering their services, want to know where they stand and to whom they are answerable. There is a regrettable tendency among even workers of great experience to speak as though circumstances such as I have described were inseparable from the fighting of elections; or to gloss over the diffi-

culty by saying that most of the trouble is overcome by the time the result has been declared.

I am afraid I cannot share this view. My experience much permanent harm the party is unnecessarily engendered during election campaigns, and, even where the effects may not be lasting quarrelling and sulking on the part of the workers often has a serious effect on the result of the campaign.

It is fatally easy to put all this sort of thing down to 'temperament' and election fever. No doubt these play their part but the responsibility on the shoulders of the election planners cannot be evaded. It is up to us to see that the 'lay-out' of the election is such that the risks are minimised. Our job is to get the utmost enthusiasm and the greatest possible efficiency out of the body of actual (and potential) workers.

In my earlier articles in this series I dwelt upon the factor of *establishment* in securing a firm and coherent system of control. In practical terms this means having at Central Committee Room Officers in charge of clearly defined departments with the physical requirements for them to do their jobs. I also insisted on the need for keeping separate the acts of *control* and *operation* because of the essential difference between the functions. This is best achieved by the establishment of the Central Committee Room as the 'Control Centre' of the campaign and of the Branch Committee Rooms as 'Operation Centres.' The Main Committee Room, where it exists, occupies a position midway between the Central and Branch Rooms and may have the quality of either, but not both.

It is an important part of my case that the work of the Branch Committee Room is in no sense inferior to that of the Central or Main Committee Room. The functions are different and neither can be adequately performed without the other.

Difference of Function

The obvious difference between the functions is that whereas, at Control, the Officers are dealing mainly with reports and paper, the Officers at Operations are dealing mainly with personnel.

The Officer-in-Charge of the Branch

Committee Room has therefore the vitally important job of choosing the people to do the different jobs, providing suitable encouragement, proffering appropriate criticism, using tact where tact is needed and forthright declaration on other occasions. In short, to 'handle' his people so that a company of workers is created under his guidance and leadership.

This ideal of what a Committee Room Officer ought to be is generally conceded with the qualification that, since only a very few people possess so many virtues, one must be content with Officers of a lower quality. I offer another view, namely, that there are many persons—or, at least, sufficient for our purpose—with the ability to discharge this undoubtedly difficult role, provided they are reasonably well-trained, properly established in their election posts and adequately informed of the general scheme of the election and the demands which may be made upon the sector for which they have responsibility.

No scheme for the conduct of an election can be called practical which does not, as a basic requirement, name the persons who are going to form the main corps of the Branch Committee Room Staff. It may be that, at this distance in time from an election, it is not possible to name all the persons who will be able so to act when the time comes.

It is equally clear that, unless a number of these officers can be easily identified now, the staff of the election is likely to be inadequate either as to number or quality or both.

The job of the Branch Committee Room Officer is so important that no one in the Party should consider themselves 'above' his station and everyone willing to accept such an appointment should be willing to undergo training from time to time.

The Party member who is known in advance as a probable Branch Committee Room Officer and who takes the trouble to keep up-to-date in the techniques of the job is already more or less established and is consequently able to enter upon his duties in the active period of the election almost at once. The man or woman who is given such a commission a week or so before the campaign opens—some-

times after it has begun—is at a great disadvantage because he must spend the vital early days in digging himself in when he should be leading his forces into action.

Of course, the Branch Committee Room Officer is not properly established unless the physical aspects of the matter are attended to. He must have a Committee Room, reasonably furnished with all the appropriate election paraphernalia—and in a really intensively run campaign in a big town it is usually necessary to have access to a telephone.

Considerations as to personnel and availability of premises etc. are naturally uppermost in an Agent's mind in laying out his campaign, but he would be ill-advised to allow the difficulties to determine the shape of his organisation. Experience suggests that, as in most other things in life 'where there's a will there's a way' and the right course is first to decide what it is necessary to do and then to consider how it can be brought about.

In practical terms this means the estimation, in advance, by the Agent of the possible yield in Labour votes of the whole constituency and the breakdown of that figure to the units he feels he should try to establish. As a general rule it can be safely relied upon that the greater the extent of the breakdown, i.e., the smaller the units, the greater the intensity of the election becomes. I do not know of any other way of increasing the intensity of the campaign—and by intensification I mean making the greatest possible impact upon every individual elector. It is important, though, to bear in mind that the more the organisation of the campaign is broken down, i.e. the larger the number of Branch Committee Rooms, the more highly developed must be the system of co-ordination and control.

In my final article next month I will discuss in some detail the operations at Branch Committee Rooms both *outwards*, that is, towards the electors and *inwards*, towards the Central Committee Room.

In the final event, the efficiency of the election and, in marginal constituencies at least, the actual result may well be determined by the extent to which we are able to raise the efficiency of our Branch Committee Room operations.

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The Thin Edge of the Wedge

by E. C. NATTRASS, Agent, Arundel-Shoreham

ALTHOUGH A NEW CONSTITUENCY under redistribution, Arundel-Shoreham, deep in the heart of Tory Sussex stayed true blue at the General Election, and like many similar rural-cum-residential divisions returned a Tory with a two to one majority over our candidate.

We realised at the count that all the hard work which had been put in prior to the election resulting in our Constituency membership jumping from 800 individual members in October, 1949, to 1,100 in February, an increase of Local Parties from 9 to 16, the establishment of two new League of Youth Branches and one Women's Section had not been enough.

We realised that only the fringe of the task which confronted us had been touched and resolved to make an all out attack on this Tory stronghold. We decided that to make headway a continual expansion of membership and the establishment of as many new parties as possible was paramount before the next election.

To increase our membership and bring Labour's case strongly in front of the people we decided to hold a 'Labour Week,' choosing June as the most convenient month.

Canvassing Teams

Details were in the hands of all Local Party Secretaries on 1st May. Each Local Party was to get up a team of canvassers, and endeavour to reach a target which was set them according to the area in which they were situated, and in relation to the electorate covered by the Local Party.

In addition, each Local Party was asked to run special efforts, dances, socials, etc., to build up the Constituency Party funds.

As I wished to spend some time in each Local Party area with the canvass team, because I believe that Agents should be in pitching as well on a canvass campaign, and as by then we had 17 Local Parties in the Constituency I had to set the local canvass drives in operation some time before the actual 'week' itself.

Apart from the circulars which were distributed giving details of our 'Labour Party Week' I went around the parties telling them all individually about the 'week' and working up considerable interest in the venture.

Disappointments and Successes

We suffered our disappointments. Canvass teams having to call-off at the last minute because members suddenly had to work overtime, snags such as that meant the campaign did not go off just as we had planned.

In a constituency such as this where we have four towns with an electorate of between 8,000 and 9,000 each, many villages and country towns where the electorate varies between two and three thousand and at the other end of the scale villages with populations downward from the 1,000 mark, a different approach is called for in almost every case.

Prejudice against canvassing has still to be overcome in many places.

Increases in membership were made however and at Sompting, a residential village with an electorate of 2,000, one member on his own made 43 new recruits.

The lesson we did learn from our Labour Week, however, and pass on to other engaged in a similar task is that despite great differences in the make-up of a constituency, the fundamental fact still holds good that no matter what type of area one may be dealing with personal contact is the surest way of bringing people into the Party.

Our total increase amounted to 610 bringing the constituency membership to 1,910. We are now talking in terms of making 3,000 members and laying out plans accordingly.

An increase of this sort will have a great effect on the next election figure, will help us financially and, most important perhaps, bring new talent into our ranks.

We shall harness this talent to the task of winning Arundel-Shoreham. Our eyes are not only on the next election, but the one after, and so on, if need be, until we finally do wrest the seat for Labour.

London Agents Confer

LONDON HAS OFTEN shown the way to the rest of the country in matters of Labour Party organisation. It is in London that the large-scale individual membership party was conceived and it is London, among the Regions, that has always had the largest proportion of full-time agents (writes Jim Raisin).

Scientific development of Labour Party organisation has undoubtedly played a leading part in the steady growth of support throughout the country larger than that ever achieved by any other political party; and this is true in London to a very high degree.

This is the background against which was recently held, at the Beatrice Webb House at Dorking (the same place that housed the secret conclave of Party Leaders) a residential conference of London Agents.

The conference naturally examined the result of the recent election and then it turned its attention to the next election.

Now, the important feature of the conference for readers of *Labour Organisation* is that the Agents were able to give thought to London as a whole and to consider in great detail the effect of numerous proposals on the variety of constituencies which make up London.

Especially careful thought was given to the so-called 'marginal' constituencies, and very valuable proposals emerged which it is believed will have an important bearing on the result of the next election.

It was a great pleasure to me and my colleagues of the regional organising staff to be able to spend two days in continuous contact with a body of comrades whose collective experience, political wisdom and socialist conviction reaches very great proportions. The method of running the conference gave scope to every agent, being on the 'group' basis, with occasional forums. This method requires the assistance of group leaders and we were much indebted to the following Agents who acted in this way, viz:—

Mr. W. J. Stimpson (Deptford).

Mr. A. E. Amey (Battersea).

Mr. R. Wyatt (Greenwich).

Mr. L. Hilliard (West Fulham).

Mr. L. Maynard (East Fulham).

Mr. E. N. Knowd (Stepney).

As a result of this conference, I am convinced of two things, first that London will make a first-class show at the next election and second, that the Party has a body of professional servants of which it may justly be proud!

New Appointments

MR. H. DURNFORD who has taken over the post of full-time Agent at West Salford comes to this task with the impressive record of a membership increased to 3,500 from 787 when he first became secretary.

A member of the Party for five years, Mr. Durnford conducted the General Election campaign in West Salford in 1950.

A busy Party is a happy Party is the maxim of Mr. Robert Goodman, appointed as Agent in Brixton, London. He contends that the atmosphere of ward meetings is vital to success. He too has an impressive record, the membership at Ruislip-Northwood having increased from 50 to over 600 during his term of office.

To Southwark goes Stanley F. Dunce, aged 33, who since he was 16 has been actively engaged in building up branches of the British Federation of Co-operative Youth. He comes to his new appointment from Wycombe where at the Spring Elections in 1949 the Labour vote was considerably increased—a good omen for Southwark.

Another firm believer in the value of regular canvassing on the doorsteps is 27-year-old Montague Soloff, appointed as Agent in Wembley North.

Bromsgrove, in Worcestershire, have appointed Cecil Burrows as their Agent, a young man of 29, who believes that membership is based on public interest and in keeping in the public's favour by continual effort. One of the best ways to do this, he considers, is by running a newspaper and since May of this year he has been editor of the *Rugby Citizen*.

Going through the list of new appointments one keeps coming up against the value placed on personal canvassing by the new Agents. Ernest Allison, appointed to Doncaster, is another who stresses the need of going 'on the knocker.' In his personal opinion, every member must be covered by a collector not merely from a financial point of view, but because of the considerable political importance which he sees in this approach.

With a Party membership of 30 years, David Emrys Williams goes to Conway as Agent. To convince supporters of the value of taking out membership is an important point with this man of much experience.

Making new members aware of their importance to the Party and thus encouraging them to enrol their friends is considered vital by Fred Hall, appointed to Stockton-on-Tees.

RECRUITING NEW

IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES it is more than ever necessary that the fullest possible effort should be made in all constituencies to educate the electors in the principles and policies of our Party. It is clear that to do this on the scale which really meets the need many more competent speakers than we already possess must be found. In these days the onerous duties of Members of Parliament and, in many cases, of prospective Parliamentary Candidates, make it impossible for them to address more than a fraction of the public meetings which should be run. In County Constituencies particularly we know there is great difficulty in securing sufficient satisfactory speakers to carry our message to the many small towns and villages in which it should be heard. What is to be done? The following suggestions, for which no originality is claimed, will, I hope, prove useful.

If you are a Constituency Agent or Constituency Secretary, always be on the watch for members of your Party whose personality and powers of expression suggest that they may become useful speakers. In Local or Constituency Party meetings spot the members who speak clearly and to the point on the many issues that arise. Spot particularly those who seem to have a good stock of facts and arguments or put their points in an original or persuasive way. A few weeks or months study will yield a list of possible speakers for public meetings. The list may not be long, but even a short list will be helpful.

Having found those members who look like being the right persons, try to persuade them to agree to speak; point out particularly that you have noticed their capabilities. If necessary, get your M.P., or prospective Parliamentary Candidate, or your Constituency Party Chairman, to add his persuasions to yours. Be sure, of course, to select as possible speakers those members whose fidelity to the Party is beyond question. Some of them may not be conscious of their own powers. Your persuasion may well give them not only the desire to speak but confidence that they can speak.

Let us suppose that you have secured a group of members who, although they may not have done so before, are willing

to address public meetings. The next step is to arrange a few speakers' classes. There need not be many classes but they must be efficiently run. These classes must serve two purposes:

- (a) To give instruction in the essentials of public speaking; and
- (b) To give the speakers some practice in the art.

Put in charge of the classes someone who is himself an experienced public speaker. It is a good plan to make a simple book, such as Harold Croft's 'Guide to Public Speaking' the basis of the instruction and

by **D. F. Alger**

- The problem of public speaking in the case is fraught with difficulties here finding, training, and

practice. If possible, each student should have a copy of the chosen book.

In the matter of training there are one or two elementary points which must be mentioned because they are often forgotten. Each student should prepare short speeches and deliver them in the classes, enabling the tutor to suggest improvements in delivery, etc. What is wanted is not elaborate training in elocution, for which there is no time and which, in any case, some students might feel to be pretentious. The essential is instruction in preparing and presenting connected statements in a simple, convincing and natural manner.

There is no special mystery and no insuperable difficulty in making a speech to

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

which an audience will listen. Almost everyone can make rambling remarks at a meeting. To make a speech which will really command attention, it is necessary to arrange the matter of the speech in a tidy way. Any speech which presents an orderly sequence of ideas and facts is heard with pleasure. And to give pleasure goes a long way towards creating conviction.

All speakers should, therefore, be encouraged to prepare notes of their speeches in such a way that one fact or idea leads naturally to the next. If a speech, however short or simple, is a coherent and connec-

lic speakers to put Labour's difficulties today.

SPORT House, explains these important suggestions on local talent.

ted statement, delivered by a speaker who can be clearly heard, the trick is done. Success is certain. (Incidentally, let it be remembered that a famous critic said: 'The curse of the theatres is inaudibility'. This applies all too often to public meetings!)

To sum up: Speakers need

- (1) To speak distinctly; and
- (2) To speak to a simple and carefully prepared plan.

Inexperienced speakers are often daunted by the notion that they must have encyclopædic knowledge and be able to clarify (and even to pack into a single speech!) every possible subject. There could not be a greater mistake. The right

way is for the speaker to take a single subject or group of subjects in which he is interested and to acquire and use all the readily available knowledge. In this way the speaker becomes a specialist; he gains confidence in himself; and with practice he can, of course, extend the range of his specialisation.

From our Party Headquarters, from the Fabian Society, from books and papers in public libraries, masses of facts and arguments can be obtained for speeches. The reports which appear in Hansard of the daily questions to Ministers form an invaluable mine of information. Whatever can be got from these sources should be supplemented by illustrations drawn from the speaker's own observation and experience. Thus a speech becomes personal and therefore *human*.

Finally, speakers should inform themselves of our opponent's case (if there is one!). They will then be able to dovetail the answer into their speeches.

I now suppose that our typical Agent or Constituency Secretary has recruited, by the means described above, some new speakers and has secured some elementary instruction for them. There remain one or two points about the use of speakers.

First, in the case of new speakers try to ensure that an experienced person takes the Chair at the meeting. If you are obliged to use an inexperienced chairman then, in addition, let two new speakers address the meeting for a short period each. This eases the strain on the untried speaker and provides some welcome variety for the audience.

Secondly, see that the speakers are given some early information about the nature of the audience they are to address.

Thirdly, give the speakers ample notice and full particulars of the dates, times and places of their meetings and, where necessary, information about the best means of transport.

Fourthly, see that the speakers' expenses are promptly met.

It is well, having surveyed the available speakers, to plan a campaign of meetings sufficiently in advance to enable all the details of organisation, and especially of effective advertisement, to be properly covered.

A Bright Winter Syllabus

says L. V. LOCKER, Secretary, Swadlincote L.L.P.

A SMALL COMMITTEE of our ward Party has for some weeks past been busily engaged in preparing a programme of events for the approaching Winter Session.

It is even now appearing in its finished form, a smart eight-page production, prefaced by a message from our Member of Parliament; ready for distribution among members and prospective new members.

A complete record of proposed activities covering every Friday evening from September 1st to April 27th, 1951.

The arrival of the Winter Syllabus from the printers marks the opening of our annual membership drive.

Each year since 1947 we have followed this procedure with encouraging results.

Experience has taught us that the two essentials which go towards the making of a really 'live' organisation are (a) regular weekly meetings, and (b) a syllabus. It is to these two things that we owe our development and expansion.

Having Something to Offer

The whole point of increasing membership is fruitless, to our mind, unless at the same time you have something to offer which will both attract and hold interest. We believe that a Party member should become an asset to the movement either as an active worker or as a propagandist, and not be regarded as a mere unit of income.

It is for this reason that we give particular attention to the production of a "Syllabus." Apart from this, to be in a position to circulate to members, and interested friends a smartly printed programme of future events adds to the dignity of the movement, just as a cheerful and nicely decorated meeting room, with a bowl of flowers on the table, gives 'tone' to a meeting.

To assist in the compilation of a worthwhile syllabus this year, we have made two experiments.

Firstly, at the close of the 1950 session we asked our members to compile a list of the features they most enjoyed.

Secondly, a few weeks later we asked for a second list; this time, of the things they would include in a programme. Not what they thought *should* be included, but

what they personally *would* include; there is a difference.

From these lists we had a wealth of material on which to work, as well as a sound reflection of the varied tastes within our group. As a result we find included in our new syllabus a number of attractive and original features.

The Programme

The Central Office of Information for instance is to provide a series of three film shows with 'Local Government' as the theme, under the headings 'Water Supply,' 'Public Health,' 'A City Speaks'; the National Coal Board is also providing a film show, and a lecturer on 'Modern Mining Methods'; a reporter from the *Daily Herald* speaks about 'Your Newspaper,' a neighbouring M.P. on 'The Council of Europe,' a doctor, an Indian, gives a film show and a talk on 'Indian Music and Dancing.' Use is also being made of the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.A., as well as school masters, councillors and our own members. Debates with neighbouring Parties, discussions, are all included, providing a wide variety of topics for our consideration.

So are refreshments, and a cup of tea (a relic from our house to house meeting days). At every meeting we hold we make a profit—after paying expenses and we manage to do it solely because of the generosity of our members who give the refreshments in turn, and what's more—they love doing it, for the good of the cause. We take our winter's work seriously, for the same reason.

Naturally we have our fun, too. Whatever joint effort can do in the way of producing a balanced medley of events has been done.

Given regular meetings—plus sustained interest you develop amongst other things, comradeship.

An atmosphere of friendliness soon permeates your meetings and becomes part of the rhythm of the movement. The roots go deep.

My sole purpose in writing this article is merely to express the hope that those organisations who do not at present issue a syllabus will seriously consider doing so, and that they will be as well rewarded for their efforts as we have been.

Plan Your Duplicating

says BETTY OTSU, Yorkshire Regional Office

PLANNING IS A FAMILIAR WORD to all members of the Labour Party and experience has proved that it is often the difference between success and failure. Good duplicating is seldom achieved by accident and it is worth remembering that the multiplicity of the single stencilled copy warrants extra care not only in cutting the stencil, but by applying every rule which will benefit the result.

With few exceptions, it is wise to make a preliminary draft, which will enable the work to be altered, if necessary, and for it to be planned appropriately and accurately. Headings, sub-headings and other matter to be centred should be counted and the numbers noted on the draft. But even if there is little or no display work, a draft eliminates doubt and leaves the mind free to concentrate on cutting the stencil. Similar rules apply to both hand-written or typewritten stencilling and are made to ensure that the work is neat, orderly and easily read.

When stencilling on a typewriter the ribbon must, of course, be switched off, and the type cleaned thoroughly before beginning the work and at intervals during the course of it. The stencil must be perfectly horizontal, free from wrinkles, and adjusted so that the centre of it and the typewriter correspond with each other, which is necessary should the stencil have to be reinserted for corrections to be made. If the roller of the typewriter is soft, use a backing sheet additional to the one attached to the stencil, to ensure that the characters are clearly defined. Never sacrifice accuracy for speed and, if an error is made, don't overtype.

A stylus pen, suited to the writer's hand, a special writing sheet and, if possible, a frame to keep the stencil firm and taut, are the essentials for hand stencilling. Handwriting should be slow but unhesitating, avoiding undue and uneven pressure which may tear the paper: the point of the pen must be kept clean, and ruled stencils will facilitate even writing lines.

Importance of Checking

Don't rush to the duplicator immediately the stencil has been cut. The most careful people make mistakes and the importance of checking cannot be overestimated. Read the stencil against the draft: check dates, days, times, venues, and mark any alterations required with a soft pencil.

The errors can be rectified by painting them with stencil correcting fluid, and it will help the obliterating action of the fluid by separating the stencil from the carbon, or backing sheet. A pencil can be inserted above the error for this purpose, if the correction is made with the stencil in the typewriter. Care must be taken that the fluid does not touch any correct matter, as this would not come out in the 'running off' and, above all, that it is allowed to dry thoroughly before typing or writing in the correct words. The fluid is also useful for filling up cracks in the stencil.

There would be little point in exercising care in cutting and checking if equal attention were not given to the 'running off'. Cleaner, better results will be obtained by inking a little frequently than a lot infrequently, and it is advisable to do this before attaching the stencil to the duplicator which should be gently but tightly stretched into position until perfectly smooth.

Preparing the paper is another essential to success. It will be more easily fed into the machine, if it has been flapped against something sharp to separate the sheets, and if the paper guides are adjusted to keep it in a firm position. It is equally important that the paper guides of the tray receiving the duplicated copies should be adjusted around the first sheet so that the remainder will be stacked as neatly as the original packet of paper. This is extremely helpful when both sides of the paper are being used, in which case it may also be necessary to interleave with blotting paper as the sheets fall from the machine, because there is always a tendency for a slight impression from one sheet to be transferred to the back of the next. Interleaving is indispensable when using non-absorbent paper such as letter headings, and the same sheets of blotting paper can be used repeatedly.

It is not uncommon for a good job to be ruined by the careless handling of wet copies and allowing insufficient time for them to dry. Be sure, therefore, that they are undisturbed when being removed from the duplicator tray and, if possible, leave them overnight to dry. The latter can be arranged nine times out of ten by planning ahead! Incidentally, stencils should be removed from the cylinder after use and they can be stored by placing them flat on backing sheets or pieces of ordinary paper.

Pressmen are not Pariahs

says a Fleet Street Reporter

IT SEEMS TO ME that Labour agents have to make up their minds to help reporters during elections far more than most of them do at present.

My experience of General Elections goes back to 1922. I have reported countless by-elections in between and am usually on the scene for council elections as well.

I find, on the whole, that while Labour agents are sometimes inclined to be even more matey than Tories, the Tory agents are more efficient in providing what reporters want.

A Tory agent usually welcomes a reporter, whatever his paper, with both hands. With a sweep he introduces the candidate without delay and asks 'What can we do for you?'

He has the biographical details to hand before the election address is printed. He will have the text of the address ready. Lists of meetings are also routine. All the relevant details of this ward and that, with their respective estimated strengths, can be discussed. A good Tory agent will also have a good deal of proper information about the Labour candidate and his campaign—if you want it from him. He's quite ready to save you the trouble of going round to Labour headquarters.

'Human Interest' Stories

In London by-elections it is nowadays usual, quite apart from separate interviews, to have a morning press conference for the evening papers and an evening one for the morning papers. A Tory agent always has something to hand out. He has the candidate there to answer questions.

The agent is also ready with an angle story—anything about the candidate, his family, his campaign which will build up a story. He knows that the Tory papers will give him a show but he also hopes to get some non-polemical 'human interest' material in the others. If the Tory candidate has an actress or ballet-dancing daughter, the reporters are told.

In recent borough council elections Tory headquarters had a special man on them with charts of councils and their political make-up on a wall and a constant flow of local information. This official was receiving results from all over the land and the reporters picked them up there. Undoubtedly a fine bit of intensive organisation and very helpful to the newspapers.

These are the kind of things the Tories do systematically and they don't care from which paper you come.

In one by-election in the London area last year practically all the reporters made a perfunctory call at Labour headquarters where they had little for them and spent their time at Tory headquarters because the latter welcomed all, made them comfortable, engaged in talk and banter and had stories up their sleeves—with all the details.

They don't mind if their slant is altered or attacked. They measure their success by the amount of space they secure, irrespective of its content.

In most Labour central committee rooms this kind of approach is simply not appreciated. Too often staff at once suspect the visitor, keep him hanging about, don't know this and don't know that and the agent, when he appears, gives bare information and no more.

There is too little attempt made to get friendly with reporters from Tory papers. Too often they are kept away from the

(Continued on back cover)

Freedom of the Press

One of our most persistent post-war shortages has been that of newsprint: daily papers have been for some weeks again reduced to six pages, and it will be months before this temporary set-back can be overcome. Nothing can be more absurd than the suggestion that this is an indirect attack on the freedom of the press. It is true that the full reporting of vital news becomes more difficult, but skilful planning triumphs over difficulties, and even within the limits of six pages, Labour's own national daily newspaper still fulfils its duty of publishing most news of social and industrial importance. More than ever, the well-informed members of the Labour and Trade Union Movement are those who read the

DAILY
HERALD

Labour Shows The Way

by HARRY PEAKER

LESS THAN FOUR YEARS AGO, the village of Kennoway in East Fife, Scotland, was one of those picturesque, placid little communities of barely a thousand inhabitants, that abound in various parts of Scotland. It was barren of political life, and its people, if they ever thought politically, took their political colouring from the local squires or landlords.

The Labour Party was born just before the war but never actually reached a membership of twenty and contented itself with the organising of social functions, raising money for the Constituency Party, but doing little serious political work in Kennoway.

Changing Picture

Now the picture is changing. Just over three years ago, Fife County Council decided that Kennoway would be the site for the erection of a new township. Hundreds of houses were built and occupied, in the main, by miners and their families from the more industrialised areas in the west of Scotland. These people brought with them a new political awareness, a new outlook on life, new thoughts, new habits.

The Local Labour Party came alive. The old officials gave place to new people. Political campaigning was started in a new way. As a local organisation it is now in the lead insofar as the communal life of this new township is concerned, and has won such a place because, not only has it proved itself to be the political organisation of the people, but it has involved itself in all the affairs that concern this new township.

It has helped to iron out the problems of 'growing pains', has played a real part in welcoming new people into the place, sought incessantly to ally old Kennoway with new Kennoway, and won for itself a unique place in this new township by combining politics with a real interest in all the other questions which crop up in an expanding township.

At the last County Council Elections, the local Party Secretary was Labour candidate, and polled just over 400 votes against

the stationary 600 polled for the local landowner, normally an 'Independent' candidate. If all the new residents had been on the electoral register the result would have been much different.

In the General Election, canvassing returns showed a solid majority voting Labour for the first time in Kennoway's history. This is very significant and a comparison can be made, that the three neighbouring Parliamentary constituencies, West Fife, Kirkcaldy Burghs, and Dunfermline Burghs, are Labour strongholds, while East Fife containing Kennoway has been a Tory stronghold almost since time immemorial.

The Key Man

The local Labour Party Secretary is the key man in all this. Around him the life of this new community eddies and swirls. Even in County Council matters, no one ever seeks out the 'Independent' County Councillor when they have a housing problem, or any one of the hundred problems that require to be taken up through County Council's channels. The local Labour Party Secretary is the unofficial councillor, doing the work of the County Councillor, despite his not being elected. Letters arrive at his house addressed to the 'Town Clerk, Kennoway, Fife.'

It is this intimately human contact with the people, this willingness and ability to help, this combining of the political work with the day to day needs of the people, that has resulted in the rapid growth of the Party's prestige and numerical strength. The local Press comes to the local Party for its news, and the B.B.C. sought and obtained the collaboration of the local Party in the preparation of a broadcast programme from Kennoway.

In every new township or expanding area, this must be the secret. Not just soap box politics or abstract speeches, but concrete, positive activity built around the needs of the community. Do this, and do it correctly, and the Party and the movement is bound to grow in stature and in numbers.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Aylesbury's Rural Rides

by W. J. WHITE, Secretary-Agent, Aylesbury C.L.P.

H.M. BOUNDARY COMMISSIONERS, in changing our boundaries, provided the Party with a fighting chance to win the Parliamentary seat for the first time in history. This and a reasonable showing in the February election caused us to be upgraded; to become in organisational terms a 'marginal minus' constituency.

One of the first results of this upgrading was to be offered a group of Oxford University Labour Club students for a week, to assist in our party development.

The areas to be covered were the worst in the constituency, those which were automatically written off as hopeless by the local pundits. Our aim was to carry out a 100 per cent. canvass and lay the foundations for local parties. Our endeavour was to take the Socialist message in its most elementary form into villages which up to the present had not had much time for the Labour Party. The young pioneers of the Aylesbury Labour Party were taking our message into the houses of difficult villages via the doorsteps.

We used our student group plus a caravan as a mobile membership canvassing squad. In the evenings we were able to link our own canvassers up with the caravan wherever it was operating. There was an average of 22 persons at work every evening and some of them travelled 20 miles to canvass.

A house to house delivery of literature was made by our literature distributors about two days before the canvass, telling all and sundry that we were coming. Individual canvass cards were used by the canvassers, so that much valuable information was obtained and recorded for future use. The caravan was a vital part of the campaign not only for its publicity value, but for its use as an office and living quarters for the students. During the week the caravan travelled 300 miles and visited 16 villages in all parts of the constituency.

Results

1. 220 new members were enrolled in some of our weakest areas.
2. Important gaps were filled in on my marked register.
3. The foundations were laid for local parties in the villages covered.

4. Several active workers were unearthed.
5. The student group and others put the Socialist case over very effectively on the doorstep.
6. The example set by our students gave a fresh impetus to our own active workers, who have been driven very hard over the past six months.
7. The week cost us £32, about £10 being the living and travelling costs of the students; the rest caused by the caravan, its hire and towing expenses. A party like this one in the early stages of development has difficulty in meeting expenses of this kind, but the effort is well worth while when the campaign has been so obviously successful.

In rural areas workers do not like canvassing their own village. The remedy is to take them to another village. In our campaign persons canvassed who certainly would not have done so in their own village. They did it because they were transported to another village; and the whole occasion had therefore a 'beano' atmosphere.

The introduction of novelty and unusualness (the caravan and the students) into our canvassing work stimulates active workers, who are always being exhorted to greater efforts by the Agent.

Areas, however bad, should not be automatically written off as hopeless (as they are so often). In every community there is someone to help our cause, if approached.

The rural worker (in our constituency anyway) did not let the Labour Government down in February. Everywhere we went it was the agricultural worker and his family who, first and foremost, gave us their support.

Never has it been easier to enrol members of the Labour Party in the countryside than at the present time.

At the end of the campaign our membership had reached 2,100, having risen from 700 in March. We shall soon have created a unit of the party to cover every village and community in the constituency. Now comes the supreme test, the fashioning of this skeleton organisation into a powerful political striking force, which will win this constituency for the first time in history.

HELP IN RURAL CAMPAIGNING

Five Hundred Miles on Foot

by CLIFFORD J. BLOOMFIELD, Agent, Wycombe Constituency

DESPITE THE OPERATION of the 1944 Education Act by Labour there is still an idea that the spheres of higher education are the province of the 'upper-class', and even if they produce a few socialists they are of the armchair variety.

Five Oxford undergraduates proved this false. In five days they covered 500 miles between them, canvassed over 5,000 electors, made a hundred new members for the Party, and provided the basis for three new local Parties. This was not done, and cannot be done, from an armchair. It was done the only possible way—on the doorstep.

Why five undergrads? The Oxford University Labour Club offered the services of teams of student workers to the Southern Regional Council for use in marginal constituencies, and we got one. A meeting with the students at Oxford satisfied me of their value, and the Party got down to planning a campaign. We decided not to waste effort by dispersing it over the whole constituency, about 160 square miles, but to concentrate on a difficult area where one local Party tried manfully to cope with about 50 square miles of sparsely populated countryside.

Ready Soil

The area chosen, whilst rural, was not agricultural, but consisted partly of middle-class residential property, partly industrial workers in scattered local light industry, and a few farmers and farm workers on large estates. Politically virgin soil in good condition to be upturned.

Campaign headquarters were situated in the centre of the area to be covered, and were in charge of a Party comrade who was available, thus leaving the Agent free to keep an eye on overall organisation and carry on the routine business of the Party. During the evenings the team was supplemented by workers from our local Parties, the Womens' Section put in good afternoon

work, but the main weight of the campaign fell on the undergraduates who were locally accommodated.

The operation followed the now traditional lines. First, softening up, then the attack, and finally mopping up. Softening up was the delivery of two leaflets, one the 'What . . . Politics Again' leaflet from Head Office (a good one this) and a brief local leaflet stating that a canvasser would be calling and asking people to have their questions ready—plenty of leads from the Head Office leaflet.

The canvassers went into the attack armed with a 14 page duplicated brief giving a description of the area, a résumé of the local political situation, and brief notes about most of the questions they were likely to be asked.

They took for distribution a locally produced pamphlet on nationalisation, and a further Head Office leaflet 'You can't set up house in a cinema' (another good one).

Mopping up meant revisiting those who were left unsatisfied by the first visit, and making further calls where people were out. Result, a 98 per cent. canvass plus some people who were not yet on the register.

One Week In Two

We had planned to continue the campaign during the following week, but the ground was so well covered that our two week's plan was completed in one, so the campaign will be extended to cover other areas of the constituency, and then, later, to cover the same ground again.

The lessons learned: (a) The Oxford University Labour Club can produce workers of high calibre, (b) the basis for successful Party work is on the doorstep, (c) the necessity of getting to *everybody* (we found ardent Labour supporters who had never voted in their lives), and (d) to get on the doorstep, and then go back again and again.

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Adopting Marginal Constituencies

by Councillor T. J. MARSH

THE APPEAL MADE by Mr. Frank Shepherd in your June issue for stronger parties to help the weak is one that must be echoed by all those who are numbered among the 'weak' or the 'marginal'. Sussex, for example is the only county which has never yet returned a Labour M.P. and has only one constituency, Kemp Town, which can even be classified as 'marginal' according to the results of the last election.

The remainder of Sussex is not hopeless, however, as the increase of over 12,000 in the Labour vote in West Sussex since 1945 proves. In this year's local elections we also won, for the first time, a seat at Arundel in the shade of the Duke of Norfolk's ancestral castle, while I held a Southwick U.D.C. Labour seat at Fishersgate with a 2-1 majority over my Conservative opponent (who fought, incidentally, for the first time in this area as an official Conservative!)

Last year in the new Arundel/Shoreham Constituency with a promise of substantial financial help from an affiliated organisation, we engaged our first full-time agent. The result has been remarkable. Membership has more than doubled from 900 to 1,900—new parties have been formed in practically every town, village, and hamlet within the constituency—and over 15,000 votes were polled in February, against 30,000 for the Conservatives.

Unfortunately, that financial help has now been withdrawn since the General Election, and the Constituency Party not being in a position to find the whole of his salary has had to give the Agent three months' notice to finish at the end of this month (July 31st).

To those of you who think of the Labour Party as a Cause, and particularly those who are members of strong Parties with strong affiliated bodies, I would ask the following:

- (1) Do you wish to write off the weaker areas as bad debts and let us fall back into our former state of part-time voluntary organisation?

- (2) If so, should we in Sussex refrain from putting up candidates, and give our support instead to Kemp Town (E. Brighton) where on paper we have at least a chance of winning? I realise, of course, that this will enable the Tories to do likewise, but they may have to fight a Liberal even if we don't nominate.
- (3) If not, can you suggest how a constituency with a 15,000 Labour vote, a 1,900 membership of agricultural workers and coastal town artisans, can raise the money to pay an Agent and fight the election as it should be fought, without diverting their energies from their main purpose of spreading the gospel?

As a clue might I suggest that one of the stronger Labour constituencies in say, London or the Midlands consider adopting such a constituency as Arundel/Shoreham, much as some of the more 'prosperous' towns 'adopted' others during the depression. The help we need is mainly financial, preferably to maintain the Agent, and also perhaps a series of experienced speakers or 'ginger groups' to tour the seaside towns and country villages.

In return, we could perhaps offer cheap holiday accommodation to either Party members or more easily, their children; a chance for the industrial area to learn the problems of the countryside and the coast, and vice versa; and above all the chance to encourage the frontiersmen of the Party in their endeavours to secure a Socialist Britain.

I might add that I have suggested this scheme to my Constituency E.C. who would welcome an approach from anyone interested, so that further details could be worked out.

Councillor T. J. Marsh, 22 Hillside, Southwick, Sussex.

(On page 8 you will have read of the valiant efforts being made in this constituency to fight against many great odds.—Editor).

Freedom of Speech

by GEORGE VAUGHAN, Barrister-at-Law

CERTAIN DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS are privileged (i.e. not actionable at law) even though false, provided they were not activated by malice. Of this class are statements made to a public servant, whose job it is to see to such matters, with a view to getting a public grievance redressed, or of preventing or punishing a crime. Thus defamatory statements to the Postmaster General about the misconduct of a postman would not be actionable; statements to a Town Clerk about alleged corrupt practices by a councillor would be privileged even though they turned out to be false; information to the police about a suspected criminal and so on. But care must be taken to approach the right person, for if the wrong one is told by mistake, no privilege attaches to the communication.

Another type of qualified privilege giving the same protection as above is that attaching to statements made with a view to protecting one's own legitimate interests to a person who has an interest or a duty in connection with the subject matter of the statement. Thus, suppose I am attacked in the newspapers I can reply, also in the newspapers for the attack was made to the world and the world has an interest in hearing the truth. If in my reply I make defamatory attacks on my accuser I am privileged provided I was not activated by malice.

Again, I can make privileged statements about a third person to someone if he and I have a common interest in the matter stated. Thus, at a Party meeting charges made about the previous conduct of someone seeking re-election would be privileged because the accuser and everyone voting has an interest in knowing the facts. Malice again, however, would take away the privilege, and it would also cease to be privileged if published to anyone without a vote as he would have no interest in the matter.

Statements made in discharge of a legal, moral or social duty are also privileged unless made maliciously. This class of case is obviously very large and overlaps into some of the other types of cases.

Trespass

A second branch of the law which impinges on the subject of freedom of speech is the law of trespass. It is possible to trespass in the public streets as well as on private property. The citizen's only right in the streets is to pass and repass, pausing on his lawful occasions to chat

or to look at the shops. He has no right to stop and sell tomatoes, or to stop and address a public meeting. He may, perhaps wish he had a public meeting to address if he is pioneering in the less progressive areas.

This is why the police have a right to come along and say: 'Pass along now,' if a crowd gathers to watch a fire, or a cat being rescued from the roof.

Strictly speaking, therefore, any public meeting on the roads or streets can be 'moved on', but in practice the police do not move it on unless it is causing an obstruction, or unless they apprehend that a breach of the peace may occur. Recently I took part in a meeting outside a village pub in Kent, in the Waldron Smithers country. After closing time the crowd occupied most of the roadway and, being somewhat in liquor, and being divided in their views, became foolishly noisy—not against the speakers—but arguing with one another in a tipsy fashion. The village constable, to my surprise, made no attempt to move them on, but stood placidly watching. In the end we packed up our traps as we could no longer be heard above the audience and went home, but I would not have been at all surprised had we been asked to 'move on'.

If, after being asked to 'move on' you remain, then you are liable to be charged with 'obstructing a police officer in the execution of his duty.'

Freedom of speech is limited, again in that blasphemy is an offence, i.e. 'the publication of words concerning the Christian religion so scurrilous and offensive as to pass the limits of decent controversy and to be calculated to outrage the feelings of any sympathiser with Christianity.' This type of offence is unlikely to be committed nowadays at political meetings.

The Public Order Act, 1936, S.5, makes it a criminal offence for any person, in any public place or at any public meeting (even though not held in a public place) to use, 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to provoke a breach of the peace or whereby a breach of the peace is likely to be occasioned.' It will be remembered that this Act was passed following serious disorders at Communist and Fascist meetings at that time. The Act also gives the police power to prohibit processions if they anticipate, 'serious public disorder.'

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London, S.W.1.

(Continued from page 14)

candidate. You don't get a show that way, even with the reporter who is out to give both sides—very often on his news editor's instruction—and who wants to do his best. Most reporters, by the way, are sympathetic to the Labour side but resent being treated in an off-hand manner.

Every effort should be made and at speed to get a reporter what he asks for. Don't ask him to come back in three hours time. Don't worry what he is going to do with the information. Don't be too busy to attend to his wants. Get him into the holy of holies and let him see the machine at work. Let him mooch around the committee rooms if he wants to, asking any question he thinks of.

Treat him as a pal instead of assuming that he's a lying propagandist anyhow. Give him something ahead, tell him about what is going to happen instead of the size of the meeting last night. And if he wants to discuss progress, tell him the facts and don't just brag. He wants news, not debating points. And don't make statements about the other side on the sly.

Mind you, some Labour agents are tip-top and understand the reporters to a T.

If, as in some cases, you appoint a special Press Officer make sure that he knows everything and can secure instant access to the candidate. Tory headquarters usually send a first-class publicity man to handle the reporters at a by-election—someone

who knows the regular by-election reporters on national newspapers and exactly what they want. Hand-in-glove with the candidate and leaving the agent to get on with his work, he generally makes the pace.

One last point. Don't work for a Press concentration too soon. A running by-election story becomes hot news about ten days or a week before the poll, excepting, of course, with the local weeklies. That is the time, when all the routine stuff has been given out, to pay special attention to the reporters—and the picture men.

P.B.

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